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C O N F I D E N T I A L TAIPEI 004200

SIPDIS

STATE PASS AIW/W AND USTR
STATE FOR EAP/TC
USTR FOR WINTER AND WINELAND
USDOC FOR 4420 USFCS/OCEA/EAP/LDROKER
USDOC FOR 3132/USFCS/OIO/EAP/ADAVENPORT
USDA/FAS FOR WETZEL, MIRELES AND TERPSTRA
USDA/APHIS FOR DEHAVEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/14/2010

TAGS: [ETRD](#) [BEXP](#) [TW](#)

SUBJECT: TAIWAN STRUGGLING WITH BEEF ISSUE

REF: A. TAIPEI 4093

[1](#)B. TAIPEI 4040

Classified By: AIT DIRECTOR DOUGLAS PAAL FOR REASONS 1.5 (b) (d)

Senior Interventions

[1](#)1. (C) AIT Director and Deputy Director raised the beef import issue with Premier Frank Hsieh (Chang-ting) at dinner on October 11. AIT/T emphasized the need for Taiwan to follow a rigorous science-based review of its current ban on imports of U.S. beef and not to allow political considerations to interfere with the timing of a decision to reopen Taiwan's market. AIT/T DIR followed up with the same points with the Presidential Office on October 12. Neither the Premier nor the Presidential Office made any commitments on the issue, though both listened intently and assured us that they understood the importance that the U.S. attaches to the issue.

Working Level

[1](#)2. (SBU) AIT/Ag Chief met with Director General Chen Lu-hong of the Department of Health's Food Safety Bureau October 14 to follow-up on APHIS Administrator DeHaven's visit last week and to encourage Chen to move quickly to reopen Taiwan's market to imports of U.S. beef. In particular, AIT/T urged that Chen quickly call a meeting of his Risk Advisory Committee.

New Roadblocks

[1](#)3. (C) Chen said that Legislative Yuan member Lai Hsin-yuan has thrown another roadblock in his path by demanding that DOH publicly reveal the names of the members of the Risk Advisory Committee and to make the Committee's meetings/deliberations more transparent. (Note: While the Committee make-up is not a secret, DOH has previously said it prefers that the Committee operate in an environment free of outside influence and Chen initially resisted Lai's demands. End Note.) Chen told us that DOH Minister Hou directed Chen to canvas the Committee to determine which members object to a public disclosure of their participation. Chen plans to send a message to each member today with a reply deadline of next Friday. Any member objecting will not be invited or expected to attend the meeting to finalize the Committee's review of the APHIS investigative report and, what AIT expects will be, its recommendation to resume imports. Chen said that he expects some members will drop out. However, several Committee members who support a resumption of imports have already been publicly quoted, or even written articles on the safety of U.S. beef and so are unlikely to be concerned by this development. The larger problem is that it pushes back the date the Committee will meet until the week of the 24th, at the earliest.

Comment

[1](#)4. (C) There is no doubt that the highest levels of the Taiwan authorities are aware of the importance that the U.S. attaches to Taiwan following a science-based approach to reopening its beef market. DG Chen seems increasingly aware of the political pressures that are building and the importance of keeping the process moving forward. At a minimum, he now recognizes the benefits of getting this issue off his desk and on up to the political level. Chen, with the full support of his Minister, has quickly developed a response to the transparency concerns raised by LY member Lai and seems determined to push the process forward.

[1](#)5. (C) We understand that Vice Minister of Economic Affairs Steve Chen (Ruey-long) will be in Washington for meetings the week of October 24. While his ministry has no direct role to play in the beef issue, it would be useful to convey to him U.S. views on this trade issue. As a senior trade official,

he would be in a good position to provide support to DOH Minister Hou in any Executive Yuan deliberations about reopening Taiwan's market to U.S. beef. End Comment.
PAAI